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MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the United Nations Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 2	3
I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE	3 - 14	3
A. Summary of substantive issues	3 - 7	3
B. Programme activities	8 - 14	4
II. YOUTH	15 - 29	5
A. Summary of substantive issues	15 - 21	5
B. Programme activities	22 - 29	7
III. AGEING	30 - 46	8
A. Summary of substantive issues	30 - 35	8

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
	B. Programme activities	36 - 46	9
IV.	DISABLED PERSONS	47 - 67	12
	A. Summary of substantive issues	47 - 52	12
	B. Programme activities	53 - 67	13
V.	THE FAMILY	68 - 80	16
	A. Summary of substantive issues	68 - 73	16
	B. Programme activities	74 - 80	17

INTRODUCTION

1. The provisional agenda of the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-fourth session, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1993/237, includes an item entitled "Monitoring of international plans and programmes of action". Under that item the Commission, in accordance with the terms of the annex to its resolution 31/3, 1/ would monitor international plans and programmes of action, particularly in the areas of social welfare, youth, ageing and disabled persons; review concurrently the activities of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development; 2/ and receive reports from the regional commissions and relevant expert group meetings. The Commission would base its discussions on a report of the Secretary-General summarizing the substantive issues and related United Nations activities in the relevant areas, and on other reports that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council might refer to the Commission for its consideration.

2. The present report is the report of the Secretary-General called for in resolution 31/3. An addendum contains a summary of issues and related United Nations activities at the regional level.

I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

A. Summary of substantive issues

3. In a period of very rapid change, it is particularly difficult to identify significant trends and distinguish transient from lasting changes affecting society. This makes the task of adjusting and reshaping public policy to meet new needs more difficult, just as the needs becomes more urgent.

4. The changes that can be observed over the past half decade (and more) touch many areas of public and private concern. They pose fundamental questions about how society should respond - how it should refashion its institutions and relocate its resources to meet the demands of a future whose dominant characteristic will be still more rapid and ever accelerating change.

5. Among the different strands of change, of major importance from the social perspective has been the massive shift in both the age structure and geographical location of population. The ageing of the population, an observed trend in large parts of the world, will soon be a global phenomenon; the world's population will also be predominantly urban in character.

6. Even more striking changes are occurring in the economic sphere, affecting what is produced and how, where, and by whom economic activity is organized and financed. This forces individuals and communities to be ever more open to new ideas and to accept mobility, re-training and dislocation, as they face competition increasingly on a global scale.

7. Change, not least as reflected in the revolutionary nature of information and communication technology, calls into question established social

relationships, traditional values and the legitimacy of institutions. Significantly, the capacity of government to provide for general and individual welfare, create economic opportunity, and guarantee social protection to all has been the object of vigorous public debate, beginning in a few countries and now virtually global in its reach. Out of this debate a new political consensus may emerge, at both country and global level, on the most appropriate delineation of responsibilities, or functions, of State, private enterprise and civil society. Within such a framework, on the basis of new partnerships among the major social actors, it will be possible to explore and fashion future policies to address the basic social goals of promoting better standards of life.

B. Programme activities

8. As part of the early planning process and preparations for the World Summit for Social Development and before the establishment of the Summit secretariat, substantive servicing was provided by the Division for Social Policy and Development to the relevant intergovernmental bodies, including the Economic and Social Council at its 1992 and 1993 sessions, the Commission for Social Development at its 1993 session, and the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit at its organizational session. Assistance included the preparation of substantive documents analysing the issues to be addressed by the Summit (E/1992/80, E/1993/77) and the preparation of procedural documents to assist the Preparatory Committee with organizational matters.

9. Two expert meetings were organized, at the request of the Preparatory Committee and with the assistance of the host countries, to provide input to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee: the meeting on social integration was held at The Hague, Netherlands, from 27 September to 1 October 1993; 3/ and the meeting on the expansion of productive employment was held at Saltsjöbaden, Sweden, from 4 to 8 October 1993. 4/ Ad hoc assistance was also provided to the Summit secretariat in the drafting of reports and the servicing of the sessions of the Preparatory Committee. After the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had considered the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the guiding principles for developmental social welfare policies and programmes in the near future (A/48/56-E/1993/6), the work of the Secretariat in this area was integrated into the preparations for the World Summit.

10. London University College Press is publishing, on behalf of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the technical document entitled Socially Sensitive Policies in the Context of Structural Adjustment: A Training Manual. The manual, which traces its origin to the joint UNDP/World Bank/African Development Bank project on the social dimension of adjustment in Africa, is based on cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania in the development and testing of training components on structural adjustment and on incorporating social considerations into overall policy-making and programming.

11. The Interregional Expert Meeting on Guidelines for the Formulation and Implementation of Comprehensive National Strategies for the Prevention of Suicidal Behaviours and the Provision of Supportive and Rehabilitative Services

to Persons at Risk and to Other Affected Persons was held at Calgary and Banff, Alberta, Canada, from 25 to 29 May 1993. An expert group meeting was convened at United Nations Headquarters (20-24 February 1995) on social welfare strategies for preventing abuse of alcohol, other licit substances and juvenile delinquency among indigenous or aboriginal peoples.

12. The Social Development Newsletter continued to be published biannually.

13. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/90, the Department continued to act as focal point and catalyst for United Nations support to the programmes and objectives of the international cooperative movement. It prepared the report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/49/213). Pursuant to resolution 49/155 on the role of cooperatives in light of new economic and social trends, the Department is assisting the respective secretariats of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in giving due consideration to the role and contribution of cooperatives in formulating strategies and actions. In collaboration with the Department of Public Information and the secretariat of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the Department is organizing an international day of cooperatives. A technical publication on the actual and potential contribution of the cooperative movement to the goals of the United Nations is in preparation.

14. The Department continued to represent the United Nations in the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) and to support the Committee's various activities, including its development of an interorganizational programme to improve statistics for and about cooperatives. In March 1994 the Department assisted in the organization of a COPAC open forum on cooperatives and the World Summit for Social Development, held at Headquarters, and it is assisting in the organization of a COPAC open forum on cooperatives and sustainable development, held at Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1995 within the programme of activities of the World Summit for Social Development.

II. YOUTH

A. Summary of substantive issues

15. The situation of youth worldwide remains precarious. In both developing and developed countries, the needs and aspirations of young people are still largely unmet. The economic situation in many countries is not favourable to the employment of youth or to their personal and professional development. The need for structural adjustment and other economic transitions may weaken the capacity of countries to devote sufficient attention to the special situation of young people as they attempt to become integrated into economic and social life. To ensure the active participation of youth in the development of their societies thus becomes problematic. Whereas, in principle, young people could represent an asset for development, in reality too many of them remain a hindrance to development, both their own and that of their societies.

16. Unemployment and underemployment among youth are prominent features of most societies and continue to worsen, without any significant signs of fundamental change. Every year, more and more young people enter a labour market that is overcrowded with job seekers, and demographic projections indicate that this situation is likely to worsen in the next century. Among young people who are at work, many are employed in jobs that are marked by environmental hazards, physical risk, psychological and cultural alienation and economic marginalization. Youth are also greatly affected by the rapid structural and technological changes that are altering the nature of labour markets and the relationships between employers and employees. The guarantee of steady, life-long employment is to a large extent a thing of the past.

17. In many countries, educational opportunities still remain elusive for many young people. Primary schools are often overcrowded, with overburdened educators and insufficient facilities; secondary and higher education may be restricted or expensive. Because of economic constraints and policy priorities, many countries have recently devoted fewer resources to educational development. The problem is not simply that education and vocational training are available only to a fraction of the students who seek it; it is also that the quality of the services provided is often questionable and the relevance to employment of the skills imparted is doubtful. Even after years of training, many young people lack appropriate knowledge and skills and remain largely unprepared to compete in an increasingly demanding global labour market.

18. The health of most young people around the world is affected by forces both within and outside their control. While generally considered to be among the healthiest of population groups, the young are often threatened by their own actions or lack of forethought. Thus, accidental death and violence are high among youth, and experimentation with tobacco, alcohol and drugs may create addictions and negative behaviour which adversely affect future health. Unprotected sexual activity may result in unwanted pregnancy, abortion or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The health of youth may suffer because they lack access to information or to high quality, affordable health care. The uneven distribution of health resources puts many youth at risk. The impact of childhood diseases or malnutrition may leave youth in a weakened condition, with a reduced ability to fight disease.

19. Adolescent pregnancy is a serious global problem associated with health and related to emotional, social and economic problems. In some countries, adolescent pregnancy is connected with early marriage, but in nearly all countries, an increasing number of young people become pregnant prior to marriage. The pregnant adolescent is often reluctant to seek medical attention early enough, because of fears of negative reactions. This poses a health threat to both the mother and the foetus. Similarly, contraception to prevent pregnancy is often lacking or ineffective, often because of societal pressures. Shortcomings in sexual education also contribute to adolescent pregnancy.

20. The average age of drug users has declined in recent years, and multiple drug use has become more common. The use of one drug may lead to the use of many others, often in the search for stronger effects and with more dangerous consequences. Like the young person who abuses alcohol, the drug user is likely to fail in many ways - at school, in relationships and at work. Drug users may

turn to crime or prostitution to support their habits. Among the factors commonly cited as being associated with drug use are peer tolerance or active approval of drug use; weak family structures and insufficient parental control and discipline; ready access to drugs; and a sense of alienation.

21. The rising incidence of juvenile delinquency in many countries represents a major social ill which has been attributed to poverty, youth unemployment, breakdowns in family structures, erosion of traditional values, weakening of community support networks, urbanization, inadequate provision of social services and an inability of the educational system to respond effectively to current challenges. Suicide rates among young people are also rising, outpacing the increases for any other age group. In many countries, suicide ranks second after accidents as the leading cause of death among youth. The rate of suicide among young men is far greater than the rate for young women.

B. Programme activities

22. The Department has continued preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. This has entailed formulating a world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 45/103, and compiling a calendar of activities covering promotional and substantive activities to commemorate the anniversary. Concurrently, the Department has continued to promote the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, 5/ endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 40/14.

23. A report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly was prepared on policies and programmes involving youth (A/49/434). It provided information on implementation of the Guidelines, channels of communication between the United Nations system and youth and youth organizations, and preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year and the draft programme of action for youth.

24. Comments and views on the draft programme of action were solicited during the reporting period from Member States, agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations, in order to prepare the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-fourth session (E/CN.5/1995/3).

25. Broad coverage on the tenth anniversary was provided through the Youth Information Bulletin and the United Nations Youth Newsletter. Special attention was given to encouraging Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to promote and generate substantive, promotional and information activities, and to encouraging concerned actors to transmit a calendar of events to the Secretariat to mark the tenth anniversary.

26. The Department has taken measures to strengthen channels of communication between the United Nations system and national coordinating bodies, platforms and services on, by and for youth. This has involved cooperative relationships with such organizations as the Youth Affairs Council of Australia; Austrian Federal Youth Union; Canada World Youth; All China Youth Federation; National

Youth Movement of Costa Rica; Danish Youth Council; Jamaican Youth Council; Malaysian Youth Council; Netherlands Committee for Multilateral Youth Council; National Youth Council of Nigeria and Norwegian Youth Council. Letters were circulated periodically to provide guidelines and suggestions to national focal points and youth organizations on the preparation of action agendas for the tenth anniversary. Working relations were reinforced with relevant international youth organizations, such as the World Assembly of Youth, the Asian Youth Council, the Committee of European National Youth Councils and the European Student Information Bureau, through meetings and joint action on publicity for the tenth anniversary.

27. A dialogue was initiated with Member States and non-governmental organizations on the preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary, through the preparation of statements and messages and participation at meetings and in missions to Denmark (March 1993), Malaysia (April 1993), and China and Hungary (June 1993). An international conference was organized by HOPE 1987, an initiative of the Government of Austria, to promote youth employment worldwide (Budapest, Hungary, 14-16 June 1993). The topic of the conference, for which the Secretariat provided substantive support, was "Youth Unemployment - Where East Meets South". A major aim was to discuss youth unemployment and the draft programme of action for youth.

28. The Department cooperated with the All-China Youth Federation to convene an interregional meeting on the role of the family in the socialization of youth (Beijing, 31 May-4 June 1993). An informal consultation of non-governmental youth organizations was held (New York, 26-27 September 1994), and an informal inter-agency meeting on youth was convened (New York, 13-14 October 1994).

29. In support of catalytic and innovative action to implement the guidelines for further planning, the United Nations Youth Fund provides seed-money grants to projects submitted by Member States and non-governmental youth organizations. A recent grant of $4,000 was made to a project for rebuilding and construction schemes of the Pakrac Secondary School, Croatia. Other projects are awaiting financial approval.

III. AGEING

A. Summary of substantive issues

30. One of the key words in international discourse on ageing during the 1990s is "diversity" - diversity of older persons as individuals and diversity in the process of population ageing. Socio-economic policies and programmes on ageing should adjust to diversity and allow for flexibility to accommodate constant change.

31. The heterogeneity of older persons is apparent in their lifestyles and originates during earlier stages of their individual lives. "Older persons" is not an impersonal, stigmatizing category but covers a wide spectrum of individuals. Using even broad criteria, such as relative age, gender, health conditions and economic status, it is possible to recognize among persons of 60 years and over (a threshold accepted by the United Nations for population

studies of ageing) the "young" old, "old" old, pre-retirees, men and women, or older migrants. Issues inherent to each group of older individuals are specific and, therefore, should be treated individually; different sets of policy and programmes should be available to meet individual needs.

32. Diversity is also a distinctive feature of ageing at the macro level of the population. While older persons now form the fastest growing population group globally, demographic ageing in different parts of the world occurs at different speeds and involves different proportions of the population. In developing countries, ageing is progressing at an accelerated rate, although in most the society will for a significant time remain "youthful". In the "demographically mature" developed countries, ageing has reached a certain level of saturation, occurs more slowly, and involves fewer people. The development of society and the ageing of its population are parallel and interrelated processes, although socio-economic development is more dynamic, flexible, and to some extent even reversible.

33. The situation of countries with economies in transition illustrates this point. While socio-economic conditions there have changed dramatically in a very short period of time and the situation of most older persons has deteriorated, the demographics of ageing have remained mostly stable, except where mass migration and armed conflict have occurred.

34. Notwithstanding differences between social development and demographic ageing, it is their reciprocity that should be taken into account in order to ensure viable policy responses. Thus, the inclusion of ageing in national developmental plans, as advocated by the global targets on ageing for the year 2001 (A/47/339), is important for the development of society.

35. Central administration of policy almost inevitably becomes unmanageable and unaffordable, particularly in developing countries. Some Governments and non-governmental organizations have attempted to combine a general, centrally developed blueprint with devolution to the local level of responsibility for the design and implementation of socio-economic policies and programmes, including the delivery of social services and benefits. This approach can be sustained, however, only if appropriate resources for both the care and participation components of programmes are also decentralized or legal provisions allow for raising the necessary funds locally. The decentralized approach also requires partnership among the major actors, including local government, community-based voluntary organizations and older persons themselves, at different stages of policy-setting and implementation, from needs assessment to project evaluation.

B. Programme activities

36. Activities in the field of ageing focus on the implementation of the global targets on ageing for the year 2001: a practical strategy, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 47/86. Aimed at streamlining the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing in its second decade, the strategy includes a set of eight global targets and a guide for setting national targets. A detailed picture of national efforts in the sectors defined by the targets and of international cooperation on ageing were provided by the third review and

appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing (E/CN.5/1993/7) conducted by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session in 1993.

37. The initial phase of implementation of the practical strategy focused on raising awareness of its principles and recommendations among the members of the global network on ageing, including national coordinating mechanisms, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The report of the Secretary-General on the strategy (A/47/339) was distributed to the members of the network and further disseminated in the publications of several non-governmental organizations, such as HelpAge International, International Institute on Ageing, International Federation on Ageing and American Association of Retired Persons. A special article explaining the philosophy and content of the strategy was featured in an issue of Bulletin on Ageing.

38. To promote regional and national action for setting and achieving targets on ageing, the Department organized, co-sponsored or participated in a series of expert, consultative and scientific meetings. These included, inter alia, the International Symposium on the Situation and Policies on Ageing for the Year 2001, organized by the Japan Ageing Research Centre (Tokyo, 12-13 January 1993); the 14th International Congress of the European Association for the Welfare of the Elderly (Copenhagen, Denmark, and Malmö, Sweden, 1-3 March 1993); the Expert Group Meeting on Inter-sectoral Cooperation in Reaching Selected Targets on Ageing: Policy and Programme Implications of a Multi-Country Study on Developmental Implications of Population Ageing (Budapest, Hungary, 10-11 July 1993); the Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Policies and Programmes for the Elderly in the ESCWA Region, convened by ESCWA (Cairo, Egypt, 19-21 October 1993); the Expert Group Meeting on the Role of the Governmental and Non-governmental Sectors in Developing and Implementing Practical Strategies on Ageing in Countries in Change and Transition (Vienna, 21-23 September 1994) (see para. 42).

39. In accordance with the global target to "include an item on ageing in international events and meetings of relevance", 6/ the Department has coordinated efforts to bring ageing to the agendas of major international events organized by the United Nations, including the International Year of the Family (1994), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II, Istanbul, 1996).

40. Among the contributions to the International Year of the Family was the preparation of an article entitled "Older people in the family: facets of empowerment" for the occasional papers series published by the secretariat of the Year. The Year was also featured in an edition of Bulletin on Ageing. In preparing for the International Conference on Population and Development, the Department participated in a meeting entitled Population and Development: the Challenge of Ageing held in 1993 by the New York NGO Committee on Ageing, as part of the observance of the International Day for the Elderly.

41. Activities relating to the World Summit for Social Development included the preparation of a special issue of Bulletin on Ageing, devoted to the "ageing

dimension" of productive employment, and contributions to the information flyer "A new age for old age", prepared by the Department of Public Information. In January 1995, the Department co-sponsored and participated in the preparatory committee meeting for a trans-Americas congress, entitled Better Living ... Adding Life to Years, convened to contribute to the preparation of the World Summit for Social Development and Habitat II.

42. A new dimension to the work of the Department involves providing assistance in addressing ageing-related problems of social adjustment to countries with economies in transition. The Expert Group Meeting on the Role of Governmental and Non-governmental Sectors in Developing and Implementing Practical Strategies on Ageing in Countries in Change and Transition produced a set of policy recommendations for developing and implementing socio-economic policies and programmes in the field of ageing in Central and Eastern European countries. A technical publication is currently in preparation. The Meeting was followed by a seminar on the empowerment of older people in East and Central Europe, organized by the American Association of Retired Persons, HelpAge International and the Department (Vienna, 26-28 September 1994).

43. In 1994, the first stage of a study entitled "Developmental implications of demographic change: Global population ageing", funded by the United Nations Population Fund and the Government of Sweden, with support provided by HelpAge International and the American Association of Retired Persons, was completed. Data compiled for the study from four countries - Chile, Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka and Thailand - reveal the active participation of older persons in economic, social and cultural life at the national, community and family levels. A high degree of participation is, however, associated with different levels of economic deprivation. The study considers specific policy approaches to alleviate this economic constraint. A technical monograph on the results is in preparation.

44. The fifth Inter-Agency Meeting on Ageing (Vienna, 18-19 February 1993) adopted a set of recommendations to strengthen cooperation among bodies and agencies of the United Nations system in achieving the targets on ageing and in preparing for the International Year of the Elderly (1999). 7/ The next Inter-Agency Meeting (New York, 21 April 1995) will focus on the preparation for that International Year.

45. The Department participated in a major quadrennial international event on ageing, the XVth International Congress of Gerontology (Budapest, Hungary, 4-9 July 1993). It addressed the participants at the opening plenary meeting, organized the meeting on intersectoral cooperation in reaching selected targets on ageing, and contributed to symposia, workshops and round-table discussions.

46. Technical cooperation is an important component of the United Nations activities on ageing. During the period January 1992 to December 1993, the Trust Fund for Ageing provided grants in the amount of US$ 169,500 for 17 projects. The Trust Fund continues to support projects in developing countries in priority areas, including the promotion of productive ageing (Bolivia, Viet Nam); training (Malta); national capacity-building (China, Ghana, Nepal); and intergenerational programmes (Dominican Republic). Contributions to the Trust Fund have decreased in recent years, as has the number of projects the

Fund was able to assist, even though the requests for assistance continue. Difficulties have also been experienced by the Banyan Fund Association: A World Fund for Ageing, which has suspended operations.

IV. DISABLED PERSONS

A. Summary of substantive issues

47. When the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) concluded, the international community agreed to build upon its achievements and strengthen those processes that had proved positive. The challenge of the post-Decade era is to translate the awareness of the rights and potentials of disabled persons into operational activities and specific programmes and services of direct benefit to them. The experience gained during the Decade revealed the constraints and limitations of most developing countries in addressing the issue of disability in a coherent and comprehensive manner. Their efforts were made in the face of formidable odds, the most serious of which are lack of adequate financial resources, insufficient technical knowledge and social and health infrastructure, weak economic bases, and sometimes political instability and violence.

48. Since 1982, three major and interrelated policy initiatives concerning disability have been taken: the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/52, provides a policy framework and guiding philosophy based on recognition of the human rights of disabled persons; the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/96, is an instrument for policy-making and action and provides a basis for technical cooperation among States, the United Nations and other international organizations; and the Long-Term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond 8/ is based on the understanding that effective change in attitudes and policies is a creative process that needs to be generated and nurtured; it cannot be achieved overnight.

49. The three initiatives on disability are closely interrelated. Progress in reaching the goals set by them could be achieved more quickly, efficiently and effectively through close cooperation and coordination at every level.

50. The Strategy provides a reliable vision, a "society for all", which sets out the direction in which to move, using a step-by-step approach. It also provides specific ideas on how to reach particular goals and a time-frame based on the quinquennial global review of the World Programme of Action.

51. Several of the core issues of the World Summit for Social Development are relevant to disability, offer the opportunity to interpret disability in the light of recent developments, and place it within the context of a broader political and social agenda. Disability is a complex and multidisciplinary topic which transcends all sections of society, all age groups, and all social, cultural, economic and demographic strata. The treatment of disabled persons must be considered in connection with questions of inequality, prejudice,

discrimination and social oppression, and gives rise to profound moral, ethical and human rights concerns. Disability strategies must be considered in the framework of policies and practices to achieve social justice, equity and human rights. Therefore, the issue of disability is linked to achieving a just and equitable society for all and is not just about "helping" a specific interest group.

52. The objectives of related activities are to determine how the World Programme, the Standard Rules and the Long-Term Strategy will work in practice, how their basic tenets will be implemented, how awareness and understanding of them can best be promoted, and how a true and lasting partnership between the disabled community and the key players in the key sectors of the broader community can be developed.

B. Programme activities

53. The Secretary-General appointed a Special Rapporteur on the monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules in the person of Mr. Bengt Lindqvist, Member of the Swedish Parliament and former Minister for Social Affairs. The Department has assisted the Special Rapporteur in his functions, which have included addressing the Third Committee of the General Assembly (October 1994), convening the first meeting of a panel of experts to assist him on the implementation of the Standard Rules (New York, 15-16 February 1995) and attending several meetings, conferences and congresses.

54. On the basis of a report of the Third Committee (A/48/627), the General Assembly adopted four resolutions on disability: Positive and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and the leadership of the United Nations therein (resolution 48/95); Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (resolution 48/96); International Day of Disabled Persons (resolution 48/97); Towards full integration of persons with disabilities in society: a continuing world programme of action (resolution 48/99).

55. The Department cooperated with the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People in the organization of an International NGO Conference for Disability (Copenhagen, 3 March 1995), in conjunction with the World Summit for Social Development. The purpose of the Conference was to create a human development index for disabled people, based on parameters corresponding to the 22 articles of the Standard Rules.

56. On the basis of General Assembly resolution 48/99 and of Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/20, the Department prepared a report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/49/435). The annex to the report contains the draft plan of action to implement the Long-Term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The plan of action was endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 49/153.

57. During the period under review, regional seminars were organized to bring together practitioners, policy makers and disability advocates to provide input

to a draft manual on disability legislation for developing countries and to adopt guidelines for the development and functioning of national disability committees to the circumstances of the regions. The seminar for the Asia/Pacific region was held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (December 1993); the one for Eastern and Central Europe and the Baltic Republics was held at Sinaia, Romania (September 1993), and the third, for Latin America and the Caribbean, was held at San José, Costa Rica (March 1994). Similar seminars on disability legislation and national coordinating committees are planned during 1995 for Western and central African Francophone countries, at Conakry, Guinea, and for African Anglophone countries, at Accra, Ghana, and at Windhoek, Namibia.

58. Advisory missions were organized to Belarus, to help establish a national disability programme, and to South Africa, to promote the work on the Standard Rules and meet with disability organizations.

59. The Department also participated in the following conferences and meetings, inter alia: the International Conference on Beyond Normalization: Towards One Society for All (Reykjavik, Iceland, June 1994), hosted by the Government of Iceland and the Federation of the Organization of Disabled Persons; the Colloquium on "Les déterminants environnementaux de la participation sociale des personnes ayant des incapacités" (Montréal, Canada, October 1994), organized by the Quebec and Canadian Society on the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps; the Workshop on Family and Disability (Montréal, Canada, October 1994), organized by the Agence de coopération internationale pour le développement économique et social des personnes handicapées; the First Symposium on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Sao Paulo, Brazil, 6-8 November 1994), organized by the Secretaria Municipal Da Familia e Bern-estar Social; and the 21st General Assembly of the World Veterans Federation (Bordeaux, France, December 1994).

60. The Department participated in three major disability-related events held in conjunction with the World Summit for Social Development and concerned with integrated rehabilitation: the International Conference on the Creation of a Disability Index based on parameters corresponding to the 22 articles of the Standard Rules (Copenhagen, Denmark, 3 March 1995), organized by the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People; a seminar to consider the social solidarity principle, based on the Danish example, organized by Rehabilitation International (Copenhagen, Denmark, 7 March 1995); and a seminar entitled Children Under Difficult Circumstances, organized by UNICEF and Rehabilitation International (Copenhagen, Denmark, 9 March 1995).

61. The Department is collaborating with Special Olympics to organize a symposium on mental retardation, to be held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 June 1995, on the eve of the 1995 Special Olympic World Games, which will take place at New Haven, Connecticut, United States of America, during July 1995. The Department is also collaborating with the Committee on the Atlanta Paralympic Games to organize the Third Paralympic Congress, with the theme "Humanity, Equality and Destiny", to take place at Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, from 16 to 27 August 1996. The Congress will bring together people from all over the world to discuss relevant issues, such as education, equal opportunity, human rights, technology and disability, children and disability, and sports and its impact on the lives of disabled persons.

62. Disabled Persons Bulletin has been produced on a regular basis during the period under review. A special issue was produced on the Standard Rules. The Manual on Disability Legislation for Developing Countries and the Manual on the Integration of Needs and Concerns of Disabled Persons in National Planning are in production.

63. In cooperation with the Department of Public Information, the Department has produced and disseminated 20,000 copies of the Standard Rules and 20,000 leaflets on the Rules.

64. Consultations and meetings were held with a number of non-governmental organizations, including Disabled Peoples' International, Rehabilitation International, World Federation of the Deaf, World Blind Union, International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicaps, the World Institute on Disability, and the World Veterans Federation. The Department is collaborating with the Swedish Handicapped International Aid Foundation on a training manual for disability leaders. Contacts were established and developed with People to People Committee, Sense International, and the Rehabilitation Centre and Harmony Foundation. Encouragement and support were provided to Adventure Club, an organization based in the Russian Federation which organized a 9,000-kilometre marathon of 15 sportsmen from the former Republics of the Soviet Union. The marathon started on 20 June 1994 at St. Petersburg and finished on 20 November 1994 at Almaty, Kazakhstan. The disabled sportsmen met with the United Nations peace-keeping missions stationed at two locations.

65. At the initiative of the Department, an interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility was established within the United Nations Secretariat. It will review the existing physical facilities at United Nations Headquarters, with a view to making recommendations and developing a plan for improved accessibility for disabled persons.

66. The World Committee on Disability and the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute have informed the Secretary-General of their intention to establish the FDR Disability Award with a view to encouraging further implementation of the World Programme. The Department assisted with advice on the modalities of establishing the prize.

67. During the period under review, the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability directed special attention to supporting activities relating to the Standard Rules and the development objectives of the World Programme of Action. The Fund received more than 150 inquiries about the possibilities of assistance and, after making technical, managerial and financial appraisals, co-financed 24 proposals, which involved a commitment of $343,620. Of that total, more than 20 per cent ($72,500) was provided by the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) under its cooperative programme with the Fund. Requests for assistance are coming increasingly from the non-governmental community which reflects their growing partnership with Governments in carrying out practical action of benefit to persons with disabilities. More than one half of the activities supported involve training and technical exchanges, including the new field of disability legislation. Others involve building national-level institutions and pilot action in income generation. Equally importantly is the seed-money role of the Fund, whose grants, on average, serve

to mobilize about five times as many resources. The $343,620 in grants resulted in about $1 million in funds not otherwise available for action in the field of disability.

V. THE FAMILY

A. Summary of substantive issues

68. The observance of 1994 as the International Year of the Family, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/82, reflects growing concern about the precarious situation of many families around the world and an increasing focus on the family as a social unit and an object of social policy.

69. The observance of the Year has increased recognition that families can be both agents and beneficiaries of development and provide a human-centred link among the various elements of development. Greater understanding and support for the role of families can be crucial to ensuring present and future generations a decent quality of life and to achieving social progress. Families are also major units of consumption and, often, production, which calls for a greater appreciation of their role in promoting sustained and sustainable development.

70. Changes in society have produced tremendous challenges for families. Many find it increasingly difficult to meet their needs and carry out their functions. Technological advances, among others, bring new risks and pressures. When these are not understood and addressed in an effective and timely manner, the capacity of families to adjust to them is diminished. Even positive societal change can disrupt family and community life. Rapid demographic and socio-economic transformations have affected patterns of family formation and family life, generating considerable variation in family composition and structure. New forms of families have been evolving, reflecting individual preferences. Traditional notions of the family, including gender-based division of parental and domestic functions and participation in the paid labour force, have ceased to reflect current realities and aspirations, particularly as more and more women take up paid employment outside the home.

71. While families are expected to provide the primary support for most people, they are not always able to do so. The community or Government must sometimes provide assistance or support through a variety of policies and programmes. Large numbers of families face poverty, unemployment, social segregation, hunger and malnutrition, homelessness and disease, growing environmental problems, the increasing prevalence of substance abuse and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Migration and forced shifts of population have placed greater strains on families. At times when families are required to provide greater assistance to their members who are disadvantaged, family resources are often being depleted. Military conflicts, civil wars and gross violations of human rights have exacted a heavy toll on family life. Thus, despite their inherent resilience and potential strengths, families everywhere in the world are under pressure and in need of support. The long-term objective should be to promote family-friendly societies and democratic families as basic social units.

72. Significant and welcome changes have taken place, and are under way, in the gender-based roles and the status of women in many countries. There is still a long way to go, however, to achieve full equality between women and men. At the same time, there has been growing recognition that the private nature of family relationships should not provide a context or pretext to deny individuals their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This recognition is essential to the concept of families and to the principle of support for and empowerment of them.

73. Great strides have been made to achieve the immediate goal of International Year of the Family, which was to increase awareness, both among policy makers and the public, of the role of families and the need to address family issues. The subject of families has become an important one in both the concept of development and the related international dialogue. There is greater recognition of the importance of supporting families and of bringing about positive changes in the family realm as a basis for a holistic approach to social policy and efforts to achieve peace, human rights, democracy, sustainable development and social progress, along with lasting progress on behalf of women, children and disadvantaged members of society. Despite the diversity of families, many of the issues they face are common to regions and countries, making international cooperation on family matters invaluable.

B. Programme activities

74. Support was provided for the observance of the Year at all levels, with particular emphasis on national efforts. The activities outlined below were undertaken since the last report to the Commission on the subject (E/CN.5/1993/3). The secretariat for the International Year of the Family of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development worked with the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system that are involved in family related areas.

75. In addition to numerous missions undertaken by the Coordinator to contribute to national events and discuss the Year's observances, substantive support and a regular flow of information was provided by the secretariat to the national coordinating mechanisms and the national focal points established in nearly 150 countries. The secretariat also published an updated version of Inventory of National Action for the Year.

76. The Interregional Meeting of National Coordinators/Focal Points for the Year (Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 4-7 February 1995), based on proposals submitted by the secretariat, reviewed the implications for national social policies of the observance of the Year, discussed forms of international cooperation on family issues, and gave consideration to appropriate follow-up to the Year.

77. The secretariat provided substantive and organizational support for a number of other international initiatives, such as the international conference on Today's Families: Bridge to the Future (Montreal, Canada, 12-15 October 1994) and the World Conference of Cities, Local Government and Private Sector Partners on Families (Salt Lake City, Utah, United States of America, 16-19 March 1995). Support was provided to a wide spectrum of

activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, including collaboration with committees of international non-governmental organizations and the holding of a non-governmental organizations forum on the launching of the Year (Malta, 28 November-2 December 1993). The secretariat organized the fourth ad hoc inter-agency meeting on the Year (29-31 March 1994); the fifth meeting will be held on 22 and 23 May 1995. It also issued a report on system-wide activities, entitled "United Nations system and the IYF". Collaboration with other concerned intergovernmental organizations continued. Efforts were made to promote family-specific research and the establishment of a network of research and academic institutions. Joint activities were undertaken with several institutions, including one for the preparation of an International Directory of Research Activities of the International Year, by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

78. Attention has been paid to highlighting the family-specific aspects of, and making substantive contributions to, the various relevant international events and initiatives that preceded, coincided with or follow the Year, including the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the International Year of Indigenous People, the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal, and the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

79. A multifaceted promotional and information campaign was undertaken. Thirteen occasional papers in the series on the International Year have been published by the secretariat; seven more are planned for 1995. The Family: Bulletin on the International Year of the Family, 1994 has been published four times annually since 1991, in English, French and Spanish. Support was provided to related initiatives through a series of special projects, such as the promotion of the Year's logo and theme song, television and radio broadcasts, postage stamps, gift and commemorative items, newspaper and magazine feature articles and sensitization of representatives of the mass media. The observance of the first International Day of Families, on 15 May 1994, was promoted at all levels. Testimonials, designating their recipients as patrons of the Year, were awarded to a number of individuals and institutions.

80. Efforts were made to mobilize resources, from both Governments and the private sector. The secretariat carried out the substantive management of the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family. Contributions totalled $2 million, which made it possible to take several measures for the preparation and observance of the Year and provide grants for 54 projects, including 21 currently being carried out. A number of in-kind contributions from Governments and the private sector were also received.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 7 (E/1989/25, chap. I, sect. D).

2/ In the context of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, responsibility for the substantive issues relating to social development and welfare, youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family was assigned to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat. With the exception of the secretariat for the International Year of the Family, the units concerned were moved from Vienna to New York in September 1994.

3/ See A/CONF.166/PC/8.

4/ See A/CONF.166/PC/9.

5/ See report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year (A/40/256).

6/ A/47339, target No. 5.

7/ See General Assembly resolution 47/5, annex, para. 3; and decision 48/433.

8/ See General Assembly resolution 49/153, part I.